



# Catholic Faith, Life & Creed

*A Complete Catechesis for Christian Living*

Doctrinal Catechesis Session  
Mary Birmingham

## EVANGELIZATION



1308-1311; Duccio di Buoninsegna; Deutsch: Maestà, Altarretabel des Sieneser Doms, Rückseite, Predella mit Szenen zur Versuchung Christi und Wundertaten, Szene: Die Berufung der Apostel Petrus und Andreas; public domain.



## Begin with the Sign of the Cross

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

### Opening prayer

Option 1: Use Opening Prayer from the Sunday liturgy.

Option 2: Use the prayer provided below.

### Prayer of Pope Clement XI

Lord, I believe in you: increase my faith.

I trust in you: strengthen my trust.

I love you: let me love you more and more.

I am sorry for my sins: deepen my sorrow.

I worship you as my first beginning.

I long for you as my last end.

I praise you as my constant helper.

And I call you as my loving protector.

I want to do what you ask of me:

In the way you ask, for as long as you ask, because you ask it.

Let me love you, Lord, as my God.

And see myself as I really am: a pilgrim in this world.

A Christian called to respect and love all those lives I touch.



### Note to the Catechist

There may be more material than you can use in a one-hour session.

Select and arrange accordingly. Use questions and material that are best suited for your particular group.



## Read the connecting statement

to draw the line between this week's liturgy and this chosen doctrinal theme.

This connecting statement is found in the *Breaking Open the Word* worksheet for this week.

### Catholic Faith, Life & Creed Version 2.0

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Version 2.0 reflects all recent revisions in the Roman Missal.

NIHIL OBSTAT

Rev. Steven Olds

Censor Liborum

IMPRIMATUR

† Most Rev. John Noonan

Bishop of Orlando

June 27, 2011

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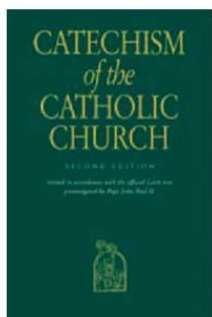
## Sharing Human Experience

Catechist leads participants in a brief, small group sharing exercise. Break into groups of three or four. Remind participants to make time for all in the group to respond.

- ▶ Have you ever had the experience of someone coming to your door to promote their Church?
- ▶ Describe the experience and your feelings associated with the experience. Has anyone ever shared their faith with you?
- ▶ What impact did it have on you?

Catechist invites participants to respond to the following questions and uses their responses to launch into a discussion about evangelization.

- ▶ If someone were to ask you what the word “evangelization” means, what would you tell them? What feelings does the word evoke in you?



## Sharing Catholic Doctrine

Drawn from the Catechism of the Catholic Church

Refer to articles 848, 849, 905, 2044, 2044, and 2472.

Catechist continues:

The Church teaches us what evangelization means.

- ▶ Our United States’ bishops’ document on evangelization, *Go and Make Disciples*, teaches us that evangelization means to bring the good news of Jesus into every aspect of life—every human situation.
- ▶ Evangelization means that we seek to convert individual persons and society by the divine power present in the gospel of Jesus Christ.
- ▶ When we evangelize, we bring the good news of salvation in Jesus Christ.
- ▶ People who are evangelized accept the good news of Christ and respond to it in faith. Evangelization is the work of the Holy Spirit.





Jesus sent them out two by two. Public domain.

The late Pope Paul VI taught us about evangelization in the papal document *On Evangelization in the Modern World*. In this document we are reminded that:

- ▶ The entire mission of Jesus can be summed up in the words of Jesus from Luke's Gospel: "I must proclaim the good news of the kingdom of God... for I was sent for this purpose" (Luke 4:43).
- ▶ Jesus went from town to town to preach the message of his Father's saving love to the poorest of the poor.
- ▶ Jesus was the first evangelizer: he proclaimed the reign of God, the amazing news of God's love, mercy and salvation to all people.
- ▶ He invites us to enter into deep relationship with him.
- ▶ Jesus carried out his mission by performing amazing signs: the blind see, the sick are cured, water is changed into wine, bread is multiplied. The signs of Jesus' mission continue today and are part of the mission of Christ we share.

Option 1: Catechist shares a story of how he or she specifically has carried out the mission of Christ by evangelizing someone. See appendix #1

Option 2: Catechist invites someone from the parish with a story of evangelization to share:

- ✓ This person had been evangelized by another person's witness, faith, or gospel living, and the witness they experienced brought them to faith or a deeper walk with Jesus.
- ✓ Perhaps a neophyte might be willing to share their experience.

Catechist continues:

Pope Paul VI's document teaches us that:

- ▶ Jesus told the twelve Apostles to go out. They in turn empowered the Church. "Go, therefore and make disciples of all nations."
- ▶ Evangelization is the essential mission of the Church. The Church exists in order to evangelize.
- ▶ We are called:
  - to preach like Jesus preached
  - to teach like Jesus taught
  - to be a channel of God's grace
  - to reconcile sinners with God
  - to do what Jesus did
  - to take, bless, break, and share the bread of life
  - to continue the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross celebrated in every liturgy
- ▶ Evangelization takes place through witness and proclamation, through the witness of the Christian life.

Catechist shares the following or similar story.

One man entered the process of initiation because of the witness of one parishioner by the name of Grace. Day after day, week after week, he watched Grace minister to the sick, take care of her mother, and reach out to the neighbors. He wanted what she had. When our team went door to door and placed an invitation to belong to the parish on each door, he remembered Grace and wanted to be part of the community.

- ▶ Evangelization takes place through explicit proclamation. We are called to give explicit proclamation of the good news of Jesus Christ.
- ▶ There is no true evangelization if the name, the teaching, the life, the kingdom, and the mystery of Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of God, are not proclaimed, someone has said.
- ▶ There are various ways the Church evangelizes:
  - ▶ Preaching the word
  - ▶ Living the social message of the gospel
  - ▶ Teaching the life and mission of Jesus
  - ▶ Using the media

## Person to Person Transmission

- ▶ This is how Jesus evangelized Nicodemus, Zacchaeus, the Samaritan woman, and Simon the Pharisee. This is how the Apostles evangelized.
- ▶ This is how Christianity itself evangelized and subsequently spread throughout the

ancient world.

- ▶ This is how we all are called to evangelize by the mandate of our baptism.
- ▶ In the long run is there any other way of handing on the gospel than by transmitting to another person one's personal experience of faith?
- ▶ The Catholic bishops of the United States affirm the need for evangelization. In their document, "Bishop's Document for Preparing for the New Millennium: Pastoral Planning: Preparing for the Year 2000," the bishops insist that we are to:
  - Help people enter into relationship with Jesus and see the action of God in their lives.
  - We are called to a new evangelization. We are called to take the good news of Jesus into our world.

## Christian initiation

- ▶ Those preparing for full membership in the Catholic Church have been evangelized and have entered a process of apprenticeship in the Catholic Christian way of life. They are being formed in the life of the Church, which, by its very nature, is called to do the work of evangelization.
- ▶ The *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults* insists that communities provide direct formation in the work of evangelization and that ministers of initiation work to "inspire Apostolic activity" in the lives of those preparing for entrance into the Church (RCIA, #78).
- ▶ Evangelization is not an option—it is mandated by our baptism.

## Baptism and evangelization

- ▶ Baptism anoints us into Christ's priestly, prophetic, and royal ministry (*Rite of Baptism*). We are baptized and anointed priest, prophet, and king.
- ▶ As priest, we are anointed (chosen for special service) to serve God's people, to intercede for them before God, and to minister to their needs.
- ▶ As prophet, we are anointed to proclaim God's word in the world by explicit proclamation and through the example of our lives. (If that is not evangelization, what is?)
- ▶ As king, we are anointed to lead people to Christ, to show them the path to complete and total conversion of heart (*metanoia*).
- ▶ Thus for the baptized person, evangelization is not an option. However, for many Catholics, even the word "evangelization" can be off-putting, due to the caricatures given to us by televangelists. Many Catholics insist they lead simple lives of faith and do not need to beat the highways and byways. The Church, however, tells us that both elements are crucial to our understanding of evangelization—direct witness and proclamation and the example of a faith-filled life. Probably the most effective tool of evangelization is the latter, but we must give strong emphasis to the former as well. We must go out into the world and give direct witness to the marvels of God.

## Evangelization and liturgy

- ▶ Next to giving praise and thanks to God, evangelization is the goal and purpose of liturgy.
- ▶ We are called to give thanks and praise to God, to be strengthened by the presence of Christ in word and sacrament, and then to go out and share what we have received with others, to invite others to encounter the living God.
- ▶ Those who reflect on the Scriptures week after week in small groups and in initiation sessions are asked how and in what way they have been touched by the word of God in the Liturgy of the Word and in what way they are challenged to more fully live the paschal mystery of Jesus Christ, to more fully enter and participate in his life, death, resurrection, and sending of the Holy Spirit.
- ▶ The primary response to that challenge before anything else is always evangelization. Every gospel, every liturgy, mandates us to go out to love and serve the Lord in word and deed. Such is the essence of evangelization.
- ▶ As stated earlier, the primary way we engage in such evangelization is by the example of our lives. The Church suggests other more intentional ways.
- ▶ In the *United States Catholic Catechism for Adults*, our bishops insist that we are called to express our faith with clarity and persuasiveness and that all Catholics have the responsibility to proclaim to all who will listen what God has accomplished through the mission of his Son and through the work of the Holy Spirit. We are exhorted to explain our rich heritage and beliefs to others (*USCCA*, p. 502). In this way we bring the gospel of salvation to all who will listen.

Father Alan Illig, who died in 1991, devoted his entire life to making sure evangelization was a high priority in our United States Church. He suggested practical ways we can evangelize within our uniquely American setting.

1. Consider our call to baptize as a spiritual vocation mandated by our baptism.
2. Be positive and hope-filled, joyfully share our Easter message of joy with others.
3. Use all appropriate paths to evangelize, such as parish programs, one-to-one sharing, and diocesan initiatives. Interpersonal sharing is the most effective. Four out of five new Catholics were invited by friends, relatives, coworkers, and neighbors.
4. Begin with what is going on in a person's life. Address the four basic fears: failure, rejection, pain, and death. Ask questions about the meaning of life, death, and future life. Share how Jesus understands our fears, is with us in the midst of them, and offers us salvation in response to them.
5. Build on your own faith experiences and those of others, especially those who have been involved in spiritual programs, such as Marriage Encounter, Christ Renews His Parish, Renew, and many others.
6. Renew your own faith, and evangelize yourself through prayer and union with Christ. "Convinced people convince others."<sup>1</sup>

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1. *Catholic Evangelization*, June 1991, pp. 39-31, cited in *United States Catholic Catechism for Adults*, p. 137.

Catechist invites participants to respond to the following questions in groups of two, then share insights in the wider group.

- ▶ In light of what Father Illig suggests (that we begin with the four basic fears: failure, rejection, pain, and death), think of someone you know (at work, at home, or in your social network) and, knowing what you know about their lives, think about how you might approach them to share your faith—to evangelize them.

Catechist invites two people to come forward, sit in the hot seat, and role play. One person is a non-believer; the other person assumes the role of believer, who is trying to pass on faith. The believer role-plays how he or she would go about evangelizing the non-believer.

Catechist invites participants to respond to the following questions.

- ▶ Now that you have considered how you might approach another person to share your faith, what might you very intentionally do this week to evangelize another person or persons (something that is very doable in your particular circumstances)?
- ▶ How do you feel about engaging in this kind of evangelization?
- ▶ What are the obstacles?
- ▶ What might you do to overcome the obstacles?



## Community Connections

Catechist invites participants to respond to the following question. Catechist provides a brief personal response to the question then invites others to respond in dyads. See appendix #2.

- ▶ How does this session on evangelization have anything to do with an experience in your own life?

Liturgy, Scripture, and doctrine challenge us to transform our lives so that we can go out and help transform the world.

Catechist informs the group of any parish activity taking place and makes arrangements for group participation. For example, “In light of our baptismal call to go out and evangelize all people, what can we do in our parish and surrounding community to follow our baptismal mandate? Parishioners might volunteer to be a sponsor in the parish process of initiation. Others might serve dinner at the local shelter and be available to witness to Christ by their actions.”



Catechist invites participants to respond in faith to the following challenge by sharing with one other person.

- ▶ What one positive thing are you willing to say about our responsibility in relationship to evangelization that you heard today?
- ▶ In what way does this teaching on evangelization invite a change in your outlook?
- ▶ In what way does this teaching on evangelization invite you to change your attitudes, behavior, or actions?
- ▶ What one thing are you willing to commit to do as a result of today's session?

## Journal

Questions for your journal throughout the week:

Consider all the ways you could evangelize others just by being more attentive to those around you? What are the obstacles in your life that might prevent you from witnessing your faith to others?



## Closing Prayer

Option 1: If this is a catechumenal session, end the session with Intercessions and Doxology ("Glory be to the Father...") or a minor rite—a blessing or minor exorcism, RCIA #90-97.

Option 2: Intercessions, Doxology, Opening Prayers from #14: For the Spread of the Gospel, Masses and Prayers for Various Needs and Occasions, *Roman Missal*.

## Appendix

#1. I was asked by a lady in my parish to come and have dinner with her family because she wanted me to witness to her atheist husband. She wanted another Christian to share his or her faith with him in hopes that he would look more kindly upon her Christianity. He was aware of the subplot of the evening and much to my surprise eager to share a meal with me.

As we began to break bread together, this young, friendly husband and father started the conversation by telling me that he did not believe in God and that he doubted he ever would.

It was no easy task I faced. The evangelization of another person is serious business. I became acutely aware of several realities surrounding it: first, faith is a gift given by God, not by me; second, my responsibility is not to question, but simply to witness to my own faith; third, the rest is in God's hands.

I shared what God had accomplished in my life, the ways God was present to me and my family amid the joys and sorrows of our lives, such as the way in which my husband was brought back from the brink of death. The young man asked me how I could be sure that was God's intervention: "Why could that not have simply been explained by good medicine and a lot of luck?" I told him I could not prove it; I simply believe it. When I shared how grateful to God I was when my child was spared from death in the World Trade Center attacks, he said, "What about all those parents whose children were not saved?" When I shared how I believed it was God's grace that kept our family together through some very difficult circumstances, circumstances that often rupture families, he said, "How then would you explain to an atheist family I know who lost a child, yet, in spite of that loss, grew closer together and after many years are still together? What kept *them* together?"

No matter how I witnessed to this man, he had a question and a retort in response to what I witnessed. I finally told him that a very famous rabbi once said that there are no proofs for the existence of God, there are only witnesses. I cannot prove to you that God is alive, that God exists. I am here simply to share my faith in God. My faith and my intimate relationship with God is the greatest gift of my life, giving it tremendous depth of meaning. I am awed by the divine presence I am occasionally gifted enough to encounter in prayer. I have known the deepest consolation in the darkest moments of my life. That is my truth, and that is my reality. I am unable to prove to you the existence of God. All I can do is share with you the intimate love I have known by the one who knows me best and loves me most.

The man was cordial and polite. He told me that I gave him much to think about. I do not know if my efforts bore fruit. The family moved away. What I know is that my

efforts were God's business, not mine; it is in God's time, not mine. If there were not a spark within, if on some level he was not seeking, the man would not have bothered or engaged me as he did. His conversion is up to God—in God's time and in God's way. I simply did what my baptism demands that I do: exercise my role as priest, prophet, and king—priest to serve God's people, prophet to proclaim God's Word to God's people by word and action, and king to lead people to Christ.

#2. Every time I do a session on evangelization, I am reminded of someone who is close to me and who is in need of such evangelization. Since I am so close to the situation I do not always feel I am the best one to engage this person. However, I always try my best to witness to God's action in my life, to be an example of good Christian living, and I pray for this person's conversion. God is answering that prayer. Several key persons—respected persons—have entered this person's life and have made it their mission to evangelize and give intentional witness. My job was to share my faith when I could, to live a good Christian life, and to get out of the way. It is fascinating to watch God's movement in this situation. Prayer is an amazing thing!

## Handout on Evangelization

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